

Gretchen A. Eliason
John E. McDonald, Jr.
159 River Rd
Worthington, MA 01098
(413) 238-5509
20 February 2009

Catrice C. Williams
DTC
Two South Station, 4th Fl
Boston, MA 02110

Dear Secretary Williams:

We are responding to the DTC call for comments on Verizon telephone service in western Massachusetts. We have lived in the town of Worthington in Hampshire County since July 2003 and have experienced poor telephone service the entire time. The most common problem is severe static and crackling noises heard while making a telephone call. At times, we are unable to make calls or our calls are dropped. The problems also affect our neighbors on the street, so we know these are not problems with our home's wiring.

We have called the automated Verizon service line many times. It always says someone will be dispatched to inspect the line. Invariably, some days later, a computer calls back saying Verizon found no trouble on the line. This past autumn, we had weeks of very bad service during which we were unable to complete calls. We had tried to call the Verizon service line one day but could not even maintain a connection long enough to make a complaint. What would have happened if we had an emergency during that period and had to call a police department or hospital?

After five years of getting nowhere with the Verizon service center, we called the MA Attorney General's office in October 2008 to file a consumer complaint. Our case was mediated by Rose Miller of the AG's Public Inquiry & Assistance Center. A Verizon service team was dispatched after being contacted by the AG's office and we were again able to make calls. It is inexcusable that a Verizon customer has to get the Attorney General involved in order to get working phone service.

Our telephone line quality problems have not been completely fixed by the service made in the fall. We have never been able to make a dial-up internet connection from our home at a rate better than 32 kbps. When we lived in rural Illinois, I (GAE) was able to telecommute to my job at a software company using just a dial-up internet connection that worked consistently at 56 kbps. When moving to Worthington, we had no idea the phone service would be so bad - we had been a Verizon customers in eastern MA and never had a problem. I (GAE) have had to turn down job offers because I could not commit to being "on call"; I never know if my phone will be working. It is not possible to telecommute or run a home business when you can't maintain an internet connection or even complete a telephone call.

The poor quality telephone service provided by Verizon and the limited availability of high speed internet here in western Massachusetts severely restricts the area's economic potential. We hope that your office can persuade Verizon to improve its service here.

Sincerely,

Gretchen A. Eliason
John E. McDonald, Jr.